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NT 720 Exegesis of the Acts of the Apostles

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NT 720
EXEGESIS OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
FALL 2001
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OFFICE HOURS BY APPOINTMENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended to help the student begin to deal with the intricacies of our only canonical book on early Christian history. During the course we will be exploring several major subject areas: 1) the history of the period which Acts describes; 2) the social and cultural milieu in which early Christians lived; 3) the exegesis of key texts in Acts.; 4) questions of introduction about Acts (authorship, date, audience, structure, purpose, textual problems); 5) the rhetorical analysis of the speeches of Acts; 6) the theology of Acts; 7) the hermeneutical use Acts. In terms of the cognitive content of this course there are two major components: 1) the lectures; 2) the textbooks.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In this course I intend to introduce you to the major areas of the study of Acts: 1) the history, archaeology, and social milieu of the period in which Acts was written; 2) the practice of NT text criticism as it applies to Acts; 3) Questions of introduction this document (authorship, date, audience, structure); 4) exegesis and hermeneutics.

In this course I expect for you to: 1) begin to develop competence in reading the literature on Acts, and using basic commentaries and tools; 2) begin to explore the different areas and disciplines and aspects of Acts studies; 3) learn how to do basic research and writing in NT studies; 4) begin to gain an understanding of the crucial nature of studying Biblical texts in their original contexts; 5) begin to understand and develop skills in basic exegesis and hermeneutics so that sermons, teaching lessons, counseling material can be prepared.

The student who successfully completes this course and masters its material will be well prepared to enter upper level exegesis or theological courses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a term paper either exegetical or theological or historical in character which is to be no less than 20 pages of text in length (double spacing, plus notes and bibliography) on some subject related to the five areas covered in the course as listed above. Sample term papers are available in the library. I will expect you to follow one of the following standard formats for such papers-- APA style, MLA style sheet, Turabian, Slade. This paper is due exactl one week after the last class session. You should be prepared to use eight to ten good sources for your paper. The Bible and Webster's dictionary do not constitute sources. Resources listed in your text books as primary and secondary sources do. I would recommend your using 2-3 good articles and 4-5 good commentaries or NT monographs.

In an intensive class, attendance in all sessions is of paramount importance. A person who misses one class has in fact missed one fifth of the term! Therefore attendance in all sessions is mandatory.

In addition it will be expected that the student has read in advance most of the required textbooks so he or she can meaningfully interact with the lectures and discussions

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Inevitably I always hear groans at this point because I require quite a few texts. It is my view that

you are only as good a teacher or preacher or counselor as your library is, and you will use the resources available to you. This is even more critical for students who do not take their education, or a significant portion of it, on a seminary campus site. Therefore this is my small attempt to help you build a good library full of tools useful for a long time to come. My own last year in seminary I had to spend \$5,000 (1977 dollars!) to get my library up to a bare minimum of usefulness. You will need a book budget from now on, if you don't already have one. Perhaps you have a relative or friend or church who would be willing to give you a book allowance.

1. The Dictionary of the Later New Testament eds. R.P. Martin and P. Davids, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1997) hb
- *2. F.F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) hb.
3. B. Witherington, III, The Acts of the Apostles: a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) pb.
4. J. Jervell, The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles, (Cambridge: C.U. Press, 1996), pb.
5. B. Witherington, III Women in the Earliest Churches, (Cambridge: C.U. Press, 1988) pb.
- *6. B. Witherington, III History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts (Cambridge: C.U. Press, 1996) [n.b. this volume is recommended not required and can provide extra credit reading or term paper material]

NOTE: * = recommended reading and not required

READING SCHEDULE

It is very important that you keep up with the reading schedule. In fact I would encourage you to start early and get ahead. Basically you should begin by reading the articles in the Dictionary which have to do with Acts-- the book, its major figures, the major cities, rhetorical criticism,, apostleship, women, missions, Christology and related matters. This should be followed by a careful working through the text itself in Greek coupled with a reading through of the two commentaries. Finally you should read the volume on Theology and on Women and the Earliest Churches. If you read ahead, you can also begin your term paper on the basis of the bibliographies in these works.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Day One will be on history, archaeology, the social world, questions of introduction, struture, purpose, genre of Acts. The remainder of the lectures will involve a selected working through of key passages and themes seriatim.

WEB MANIA

There are a wide and wild variety of websites that you may find helpful for Biblical studies: 1) <http://www.luthersem.edu/learnnet/biblepro/bible.htm>; 2) if you want to test your Bible knowledge try <http://www.spectra.net/~diana/webt2.htm>; 3) <http://www.americanbible.org>; 4) <http://www.gospelcom.net/ccmag/mags.html>; 5) <http://scholar.cc.emory.edu/scripts/highplaces.html>.

If you are looking for a major league search engine try: 1) <http://www.findspot.com/>; or 2) <http://argos.evansville.edu/>.